

ALLEGORIES IN EUPHRASE KEZILAHABI'S EARLY NOVELS¹

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1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse allegories in the first four novels of the Swahili-writing author Euphrase Kezilahabi who is one of the most renowned authors in contemporary Tanzania. This analysis will be based on allegory as it is defined in literary studies.

What is aimed at with this study is a hermeneutical interpretative approach to the allegories found in Kezilahabi's early novels which shall be based on as much contexts as available: text-context, intertextual context, cultural context, historical context, only to mention the most important (cf. Möhlig 1994: 257). The text-context or co-text, however, is considered as the most reliable basis of such a study.

To what extent and how does the author use allegories? Which central thematic complexes are transported by the use of allegories?

In literary studies, allegory nowadays is subclassified under the concept of figurativeness or imagery (cf. Korte 1996; Ricklefs 1996). However, the canon of forms of speech that are supposed to be part of this concept, remains vague (cf. Zimmermann 2000: 17f; for 'image' cf. Mitchell 1986: 10). Unlike its "smaller sister" metaphor, allegory has not yet gained much attention from scholars. It seems to be more difficult to integrate allegory into a complex theory.

This study is based on the hermeneutical paradigm of allegory theory while taking into consideration the basic insight provided by deconstruction theory (cf. Müller 1993).

Referring to the cultural context, we have to mention the general problem of external cultural analysis. As Max Black has pointed out for metaphor (Black 1962/1996: 71), allegories often cease to be understood even in a neighbouring society. Thus it seems quite clear that this is also the case when allegories "travel to", i.e. when they are absorbed by another cultural environment.

Another important point is to doubt whether it is methodologically permissible to analyse allegories from the Tanzanian Bantu-speaking context by the help of Western literary theories. This objection can be defused by the fact that allegoricity (as metaphoricity) is

¹ I am very grateful to PD Dr. Thomas Geider and Mwalimu Hassan Adam Uttah for their great patience and support in commenting on the manuscript of this article. Furthermore, I would like to thank Prof. Wilhelm J. G. Möhlig, who supervised my M. A. thesis, and Prof. Elena Bertoncini-Zúbková, who laid the foundation stone of my enthusiasm about contemporary Swahili literature.

considered as a universal language phenomenon² Though we must have considerable reservations concerning hermeneutical conclusions, as we are not insiders of a culture, an interpretative approach is possible that proceeds mainly on a text-immanent basis.

To oppose to a small extent this problem of a culture-external view (cf. Möhlig 1986) I carried out some interviews with Swahili-speakers in Dar es Salaam in October 1999 that will occasionally shed light on some of the discussed aspects (cf. 2.3.).

2. Kezilahabi's oeuvre

2.1. Short overview

Euphrase Kezilahabi was born in 1944 in the village of Namagondo on Ukerewe Island, Lake Victoria. According to various scholars of Swahili studies he is one of the most renowned contemporary authors of Tanzania (cf. Arnold 1988: 216; Bertoncini-Zúbková 1989: 107; Ohly 1990: 165; Ricard 1995: 90; Yahya-Othman 1999: 83).

His oeuvre comprises all genres from prose to drama and poetry. It can be divided into two periods. A central theme of his early works is the conflict between the older and the younger generation in Tanzanian society which is caused by the Nietzschean "de-valuation of all values" concerning traditional life (cf. Mlacha 1988; 1991a; 1993). The recurrent theme that connects his early novels with the novellas of the 1990s is the search of the individual for the meaning and origin of life.

Kezilahabi's literary debut *Rosa Mistika* (1971) which he wrote when still in Secondary School, is the story of the tragically failing emancipation of a young woman from her parents, tradition and societal constraints. After being banned for a certain period, the book was rapidly introduced into secondary school curricula and became a bestseller in Tanzania.³ *Kichwamaji* ('Wrong-headed (mind)'⁴; 1974) like its predecessor is set in Ukerewe and depicts the search of a young man for the meaning of life. In this second novel the author intensifies his consideration of the conflict between traditional culture and European influences. *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* ('The world is a place of chaos', 1975) continues this search for meaning and values and at the same time portrays the politicised societal life in Tanzanian *ujamaa* period. Kezilahabi's fourth novel, *Gamba la Nyoka* ('Snake's skin'; 1979), describes the installation

² The permissibility of this view was confirmed to me by Prof. Said Ahmed Mohamed Khamis (Bayreuth) from a cultural insider's perspective.

³ Bertoncini-Zúbková describes the reaction of the Tanzanian public towards *Rosa Mistika* as a "mixture of enthusiasm, perplexity and indignation amounting to scandal" (Bertoncini-Zúbková 1980: 87; cf. also Ohly 1981: 96).

⁴ Literally, "water-head, hydrocephalus". There have been several proposals for translation. Dictionaries give "stubborn, stupid" (Baba Malaika 1997: 65; Höftmann / Herms 2000: 121) whereas scholars have proposed "Empty-head" (Bertoncini 1980, Mlacha 1987), "Misfit" (Bertoncini 1989) and "Idiot" (Wamitila 1999).

of *ujamaa* villages (often by force) and how people were coping with life in these new cooperative villages.⁵

A bitter political satire is Kezilahabi's *Kaputula la Marx* (Marx's shorts), up to now the only drama he wrote. Its manuscript has been circulating at the University of Dar es Salaam since 1979, and was finally published in October 1999. The erratic journey of a president who is more and more ignorant of reality but is still aiming at leading his people to the mysterious country of *Usawa* ("Equality") did and does not need further explication.⁶

Kezilahabi's debut in poetry, *Kichomi* ('Stabbing Pain'; 1974) is marked by a positive view of the young Tanzanian nation, whereas his second collection of poems, *Karibu Ndani* ('Welcome inside'; 1988) employs a much more critical tone, like the above-mentioned drama (cf Bertoncini-Zúbková 1996).

For the genre of short stories one also has to mention *Wasubiri Kifo* ('Those awaiting death'; 1976), *Mayai – Waziri wa Maradhi* ('Mayai, Minister of Disease'; 1978) and *Cha Mnyonge Utakitapika Hadharani* ('You will vomit in public what belongs to the poor'; 1985).

As a caesura we can postulate the novella *Nagona* (Name; [Kerewe]: 'I snore'), published in 1990, which marks the beginning of a trilogy that has not been completed yet.⁷ It describes the erratic search of the literary ego for the ultimate cause of life that is personified in a mysterious female character. Indifferent of space and time, the ego wanders through an imagined world of heights and valleys. *Mzingile* ('Labyrinth'; 1991) continues this journey: the ego has to solve riddles that seem to be insolvable, a motif similar to that of the Egyptian sphinx.⁸

2.2. The early novels

So far we can divide Kezilahabi's published oeuvre into two periods. In the first period Kezilahabi applies a relatively simple style that we may call realism. By that time, his maxim was to transport complex themes in a simple language so that he will be readable and understood by as many people as possible.⁹ In the genre of prose, we can postulate a caesura between *Gamba la Nyoka* and *Nagona* (cf. also Mbatiah 1998). Kezilahabi himself confirms this caesura in the following verses of his poem *Hii moja hadithi* (1988):

⁵ For linguistic studies on Kezilahabi's novels cf. Hauner 1984, Mlacha 1989 & 1991b, and Bertoncini 1991 & 1997. Kezilahabi's early novels have been exhaustively analysed by using structuralist methods by Mlacha 1986, 1987 & 1991a.

⁶ Cf. Bulcaen 1997

⁷ Interview with E. Kezilahabi by Deutsche Welle radio, May 1999

⁸ These two novellas have been analysed as to the central themes (Chenou 1997), the question of genre (Gromov 1998) and philosophical motifs (Wamitila 1991 & 1998: 87-89). Cf. also Mezger's article about *Mzingile* in this issue of *Swahili Forum*

⁹ Cf. Interview with the author on 16/08/1978 in Kanyarukiga 1981: 494 and Kezilahabi 1985: 136. As Arnold states: "Kezilahabi's novels are read mainly by the intelligentsia, but he is grappling with the need to level the distinction between 'artistic' and 'popular' literatures" (Arnold 1984: 68).

Ujana wangu ulianza kwenye ua waridi fumbo
*Ukaishia kwenye gamba kandokando ya mto*¹⁰

My youth began with a mystical rose
 And ended with a skin along the river.¹¹

In *Nagona* and *Mzingile*, Kezilahabi deepens his studies of philosophy and psychology and changes his style completely so that these novellas are much more difficult to understand. The setting is no longer a realistic one (cf. Kanyarukiga 1981: 479), but a description of symbolic landscapes beyond space and time. Chronologically, if we consider the years of publication, we can postulate for this caesura the year 1990.

The first four novels *Rosa Mistika*, *Kichwamaji*, *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* and *Gamba la Nyoka* form a unity in several respects. The main setting is the traditional village-based context of Ukerewe, Kezilahabi's home region.¹² Kezilahabi portrays traditional society and contrasts it with the influences of Western culture (school, university, urbanization) affecting the younger generation. Besides this family-linked and social dimension of conflict between old and young, traditional and modern, the political dimension becomes more important in *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* and *Gamba la Nyoka*. The pro and contra of *ujamaa* politics is discussed by illustrative examples. Here Kezilahabi always presents the view of 'common' people (cf. Gérard 1981: 149).

Additionally, from all of these four novels we can trace the basic philosophical constraint of Kezilahabi that can be labelled as existentialist philosophy of life (cf. Madumulla 1991: 40). The question of meaning of life, the search for God or a higher being, the recoil from everything what Man¹³ is able to do – this thematic complex is depicted by using a rich variety of allegories.¹⁴

2.3. Interviews

In October 1999 I carried out ten interviews with Swahili-speakers in Dar es Salaam, many of them experts in Swahili literature.¹⁵ The basis of these interviews was a catalogue of sixty

¹⁰ E. Kezilahabi 1988 *Karibu ndani*: 45, verses 4 and 5

¹¹ English translation L. D.

¹² Interestingly, Ukerewe is also the home region of Aniceti Kitereza whose family saga *Bwana Myombekere na Bibi Bugonoka* (published shortly after his death in 1980) is an outstanding work of African literature. Cf. Möhlig 1998. A first approach to compare the works of Kitereza and Kezilahabi has been done by Crebolder-van der Velde 1986.

¹³ In the following we will use Man (capital letter) for human being, i. e. women and men.

¹⁴ For other imagery in Kezilahabi's novels and poetry cf. Bertoncini-Zúbková 1992.

¹⁵ I am very indebted to them and I hereby want to thank them for their great patience and support. The interviewed were (in chronological order): 1. Dr. Mugyabuso M. Mulokozi, Professor of Swahili Literature; 2. Nondolwa Kilness Sekwiha, Student of Swahili Literature; 3. Geoffrey [second name unfortunately unknown], Secondary School student; 4. Dr. Albina Chuwa, Lecturer of Lexicography; 5. Dr. Saidia Yahya-Othman, Professor of Linguistics; 6. Dr. Kulikoyela K. Kahigi, Lecturer of Swahili Literature; 7. Amani Joram, Secondary School student; 8. Azadi Rwigula Muumba, Retired Engineer, Kerewe-speaker; 9. Mrs. Agnes Mngodo, Secondary School Swahili Teacher; 10. Dr. Fikeni E. M. K. Senkoro, Professor of Swahili Literature.

questions concerning the individual reception of Kezilahabi's oeuvre and, more specifically, his early novels. I read out text passages to the interviewed and asked them for interpretation.

The results of these interviews will be occasionally used to support or contrast our interpretations.

3. Theories of Allegory

Scholars belonging to a variety of academic disciplines (linguistics, literature, art, philosophy, cultural anthropology, theology) in most cases analyse allegories with reference to the immediate context. From this concrete work they do neither develop a general definition of allegory nor a comprehensive theory of allegory.

Approaches in defining allegory so far have treated its distinction from other imagery or figurative language like metaphor, personification, enigma, parable, and symbol (Alt 1995: 3).¹⁶

3.1. Allegory in distinction to other imagery

3.1.1. Allegory and metaphor

Etymologically, allegory means "to talk differently than in public" (*állos + agoreúein* [Greek:] to talk differently than in the marketplace [*agorá*]).

In rhetorical tradition, allegory has been derived from metaphor and named "*metaphora continua*" (Quintilianus / Rahn 1975: VIII, 6, 44). While metaphor was supposed to be situated on the level of a single word, allegory was considered as the same phenomenon on the syntactic or narrative level.

We can conclude here: in some cases, the boundaries between metaphor and allegory are soft ones. However, the main distinction between the two consists in the following: in metaphor, at least two meanings merge to become one. In allegory, temporality is present; there are at least two levels of meaning which can be found out *one after another* and which continue to exist separately (cf. Kurz 1997: 33).

3.1.2. Allegory and personification

There is a special affinity between allegory and personification that has even led to equate the two. We can state here that personification is one type of allegory or forms one element of allegory (Cf. Fletcher 1964; Alt 1995: 625; Menke 1998; Gaier 1998: 81). Personification is frequently used in allegory to render actions more vivid. It serves as an identification stimulus to the reader.

¹⁶ The question of symbol will be left out here. The main reason is that the interpretation of symbols needs much more extra-textual research. This would be a research topic by itself.

3.1.3. Allegory and enigma

Deriving from traditional rhetoric, an enigma is an allegory that is difficult to understand or which remains to a certain extent not understandable (Quintilianus / Rahn 1975: VIII, 6, 52; Drügh 2000: 14). Thus an enigma is characterized by semantic openness that constitutes its great aesthetic potential. Enigma is frequently used to create narrative tension.

3.1.4. Allegory and parable

There are many points of contact between allegory and parable. In many cases, it is not possible to come to a sharp distinction between the two (cf. e.g. Emrich 1986: 211f).

A parable is a story whose meaning goes beyond the level of the narrated, and which is characterised by its vividness and richness in imagery (cf. Dithmar 1995: 13; Elm 1982).

Concerning parable we can talk in most cases of a fixation of the second level of meaning. Accordingly, the didactic element that shall lead the reader to this (only) second level of meaning is anchored much stronger in parable than in allegory (Elm 1986: 10; 35).

Thus allegory both in form and concerning its levels of meaning can be regarded as the more open figurative category.

3.2. Definition and discussion of allegory in contemporary research

3.2.1. Allegories of Reading

After Walter Benjamin's important study about allegory (1916/1928), the most powerful impulse in allegory studies is found in Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading* (1979; cf. also de Man 1969). This study is one of the foundation stones of the theory labelled as 'deconstruction', which was developed by de Man and the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (cf. esp. Derrida 1967).

As the title suggests, de Man establishes allegory as a special type of reading practice.

De Man holds that there is never a single meaning of a text. The deconstruction of all elements of a text leads to (at least) two different "readings", i.e. ways of understanding the text, which are contradicting or even negating one another. This leads to a certain "unreadability" of texts that should not be misunderstood as meaninglessness. Nor should it be understood as an arbitrariness of meaning – it is just the unsolvable polysemy of texts that makes reading such a pleasure.

This acknowledgement of the plurality of meaning puts the epistemological hubris of believing in the one (and only) meaning of literary texts (and other phenomena) to an end. The danger of "misreading" in the sense of limiting a text to a single meaning can be understood as a critical reflection on academic studies and epistemology (cf. Bossinade 2000: 123-125; Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 195-222).

As James Comas put it:

"This intellectual ethics requires an examination not only of the critical concepts we find ourselves using, but an examination not only of the influence of these concepts, an examination of the institutions of literary study: the place where we work." (1990: 28)

Thus this reflection can be made fruitful as a general criticism of ideology (Menke 1993: 273).¹⁷

We can therefore conclude here that it is generally possible to read texts as allegories because they always propose several meanings to the reader.

3.3.2. Allegory theory after de Man

Even in recent publications the rhetorical tradition of defining allegory is apparent (Alt 1995: 6; Böning 1999: 165). As we noticed the absence of a differentiated allegory theory above, Alt states that a prototype definition of allegory will remain problematic (Alt 1995: 628).

Heinz Drügh (2000) on the other hand, holds that it is neither adequate to stick to the rhetorical tradition nor to search for the one (and only) definition of allegory. He wants to show that allegorical structure is characterised by its inherent semantic synthesis that forms a precarious process never coming to a standstill (Drügh 2000: 8). The reason for that is the general "double-headedness" ("*Janusköpfigkeit*") of allegory.

3.3. Methodological conclusion

A1. Formally, allegory is situated above the level of a word, and mostly above the level of a sentence. Its form is very variable, ranging from narration to dialogue, song, proverb, and text inside a text.

A2. Allegory has at least two meanings. Besides its first, "literal", "actual", "foreground" meaning it possesses (at least) a second, "figurative", "not actual", "background" meaning.¹⁸ Following Renschler, this common terminology can also be replaced by "relating complexes which offer access to different horizons of meaning" (Renschler 1995: VI).

A3. The access to the second level of meaning of allegory is offered either explicitly, or implicitly.

a) Explicit allegories are allegories that are indicated, explained or transferred by the author, the narrator or (a) character(s) of the novel before or after the central passage of the allegory. The access to the second level of meaning is possible when reading it for the first time. An example for indication is: *ninaweza kukueleza kwa hadithi* - I can explain it to you by (the

¹⁷ For a concise summary of criticism of de Man's theory cf. Fohrmann 1993

¹⁸ In stead of Baker's "doubleness at its heart", it is more precise to use the terms "ambiguity" or "polysemy" (Cf. Baker 1994: 308).

means of) a story. An example for explanation or transfer is: *tunaweza kulichukua kama...* – we can take it as... (cf. also Massa 2000: 315-317).¹⁹

b) Implicit allegories are allegories without indication or explanation in the immediate co-text (text-context). The access to the second level of meaning is mostly possible after several times of reading, relating the passage to the co-text of the whole novel, and, if possible, to other contexts available (for different terminology cf. Blank 1994: 12; 14 and Kurz 1979: 17-19).

A4. As far as the distinction of allegory in regard to other forms of figurative language we have come to the following answers:

a) Personification is a recurrent element of allegory and a technique of the allegorical process respectively.

b) Enigma and parable can be elements or types of allegory.

4. Allegories in Kezilahabi's early novels

4.1. Allegories with animals as motifs

4.1.1. The lizard and the ants

Nilipokuwa nikivua nguo zangu niliona mjusi amejibanza kati ya ufa wa jiwe. Mwili wake wote ulikuwa ndani lakini mkia wake ulikuwa nje. Yeye alifikiri nilikuwa simwoni Nilikwenda pole pole na mara moja nilikata mkia wake. Mjusi alijisukuma ndani. Mkia wake ulianguka chini. Ulipapatika Nilishangaa, kwani maisha yote alikuwa nayo mjusi aliyekuwa ndani. Sikiona kwa nini mkia ulirukaruka kwa muda mrefu vile kama kwamba ulikuwa bado umeungana na mjusi. Mwishowe nilijiona mjinga kukaa nikitazama mkia wa mjusi. Nilijitumbukiza majini Baada ya kuoga niliona mkia ukibururwa na mamia ya sisimizi kuelekea kwenye kishimo kidogo. (Kichwamaji: 102)

When I was undressing myself I saw a lizard that had squeezed itself into a stone crack. All of its body was inside except for its tail that was outside. It thought I did not see it. I approached it slowly and I suddenly cut its tail. The lizard pressed itself inside. Its tail fell to the ground. It wriggled. I was astonished, for all the life that the lizard had was with him inside. I did not see why the tail hopped for a long time as if it was still being joined to the lizard. In the end I felt as a fool sitting and watching a lizard's tail. I jumped into the water. When I finished swimming I saw the tail being dragged by an army of ants heading for a very small hole. [translation L. D.]

A1. Formally, this allegory is embedded in the narration and does not attract the reader's attention by its genre.

A2. At the surface, there is nothing astonishing when we see a lizard deprived of its tail. But the embedment suggests to the reader that there might be more than a simple astonishment, because the episode is preceded by a philosophical reflection of Kazimoto about the meaning of life.

¹⁹ As we could not include all of the analysed allegories into this article, these are examples from the allegory of lion and baboon in *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 112f. and from the allegory of the black circle and white signs in *Kichwamaji*: 208

Kazimoto is not only astonished about the tail which seems to be able to survive on its own, but also about the fact that the lizard is able to survive. Regarding the context of the novel, the lizard can be interpreted as a human being who, against his or her expectations, is able to survive even after losing a big part of his or her body (which could stand for identity). Does Kazimoto representing the young "Westernised" generation of Tanzania in the seventies relate this tail to the traditions still ruling in his home village? This observation of an animal might tell him: against the normally expected (i.e. death after losing such a big part of the body), modern Man who suffers from alienation survives without (the practice of) tradition.²⁰

A3. It is an implicit allegory. There are neither indications nor explanations. We can assume that the second level of meaning cannot be recognized when reading it for the first time. The explanatory remark *Nilishangaa, kwani maisha yote*... (I was astonished, for all the life...) gives us a certain hint. *Nilijiona mjinga kukaa nikitazama mkia wa mjusi* (In the end I felt as a fool sitting and watching a lizard's tail) is only pretending to be a self-critical reflection of the first person narrator. It implies a hidden hint to the interpreter (who has only remarked one level of meaning) to search access to a further level of meaning. This makes the (conscious or unconscious) pause of the first person narrator while regarding the animals more comprehensible.

A4. A central element of the allegory is the personification *mjusi* (lizard) -> *[binadamu]* (Man). This is made explicit by *Yeye alifikiri nilikuwa simwoni* (*It thought I did not see it*). –

Apart from this interpretation, we can trace an interesting intertextual relationship to a passage from *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*:

"Unamwona mjusi huyo! [...] Hana mkia lakini bado anapenda kuishi. Ndivyo nasi tulivyo. Huu unaweza ukawa ni mwanzo tu wa ta[a]bu mpya. Hivyo ndivyo ulimwengu ulivyo – Uwanja wa fujo. Na katika fujo hii sisi twapenda kuishi" (*Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 163)

"Look at that lizard! [...] He has no tail but he still likes to live. That is how we are. This can be the very beginning of new problems. This is how the world is – a place of chaos. And in this chaos we like to live in." [translation L. D.]

In this dialogue between the main characters Dennis and Tumaini, the reaction towards a lizard without a tail has changed. *Kumbe anaendelea kuishi!* (Gosh he continues to live!) has become the assertion *anapenda kuishi* (he likes to live). For the reader familiar to both novels, the *mjusi* motif evokes the reflection in *Kichwamaji* and interrelates the two novels.

4.1.2. The rescued bee

Juu ya jiwe niliona kibwawa kidogo cha maji. Ndani ya maji haya niliona nyuki ameanguka akiogelea. Nilijongea karibu. Mwanzoni nilifurahi kumwona huyu mdudu akipigania maisha. Lakini baada ya muda mfupi nyuki alikata tamaa. Nguvu zilimwishia. Alisambaza mbawa zake, miguu yake ilianza kupiga pole pole kama mtu anayekata roho. Huruma iliniingia moyoni. Niliona kwamba nilikuwa na uwezo wa

²⁰ As I have shown in my M.A. study the motif of a lizard's tail is also found in Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* (1958) and in the first part of Amadou Hampaté Bâ's autobiography *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul* (1991) (Diegner 2001: 39)

kuokoa maisha yake kwa tendo moja dogo tu ambalo lilikuwa halihitaji hata tone moja la jasho. Nilijiona mungu mdogo. Nilitazama tena pande zote, watoto, nyumba na miti, vyote vilikuwa chini yangu.

Nilichukua kijiti kidogo sana ambacho kwacho nilimtoa yule nyuki majini. Mbawa zake zilipokauka aliruka bila kusema asante. Aliruka bila hata kufahamu nani amemwokoā. Kwa huyu mdudu nilikuwa na nguvu ambazo haziwezi kufahamika. "Labda mfano huu unaweza kumsaidia mwanadamu katika kuelewa fumbo la Mungu," nilisema moyoni "Lakini labda haiwezekani. Tuseme kama yule nyuki akinifikiria mimi kuwa mwenye uwezo usioeleweka siyo kusema kwamba mimi ni mungu, kuna mwenye uwezo usioeleweka zaidi kuliko mimi. Labda hata mwanadamu anaweza kusema kwamba kuna mwenye uwezo zaidi kuliko yule tunayemfikiria kuwa Mungu. Lakini kama ni vile tutakwenda nyuma mpaka wapi? Labda tunaweza kusema kwamba ni Wakati. Wakati wenyewe ndio Mungu maana haukuumbwa." Kichwa kilianza kuwanga. Niliona kazi bure kuendelea kufikiri juu ya swali hili. (Kichwamaji: 88f)

"On top of a stone I saw a very small puddle of water. In this water I saw a bee that had fallen into it, swimming. I moved nearer. At the beginning I enjoyed watching this insect struggling for life. But after a short while the bee lost hope. It ran out of strength. It stretched its wings; its legs began to kick about slowly like a human being who is dying. My heart was filled with pity. I realized that I had the power to save its life by just a small deed that did not even need one drop of sweat. I felt like a small god. I looked in all directions again, children, houses and trees, everything was under me.

I took a very small stick and with it I drew that bee out of the water. When its wings dried it flew away without saying thank you. It flew away without even knowing who had saved it. For this insect I had power that is not understandable. "Maybe this example can help Man understand the mystery of God," I told myself. "But maybe it is not possible. Let us say if this bee imagined me as someone who has not understandable power it is not to say that I am a god, there is someone who has more of this not understandable power than me. Maybe Man can even say that there is someone who has more power than the one that we imagine as God. But if it is so, until where will we go back? Maybe we can say that it is Time. Time itself is God as it was not created [by anyone]." [My] head began to ache. I thought it useless to continue to think about this matter. [translation L. D.]

A1. The form of this allegory is a narrative episode in first-person perspective reflecting an observation. What follows is an inner monologue (*nilisema moyoni* – [lit.:] 'I said in my heart'; I told myself) that ends by two narrative sentences.

A2. On the first level of meaning one can remark how Kazimoto's reaction changes from gloating (*nilifurahi* – I enjoyed) to pity (*huruma* – pity, sympathy). The fact that the bee does not thank Kazimoto, an ironic apposition, is less noteworthy than the distribution of roles between the bee and Kazimoto. The bee which neither understands what happens to it nor who is rescuing it, and the man who holds the bee's fate in his hands, can be transferred to a second level of meaning. The bee at the mercy of fate may represent Man who in the course of his life again and again has to face events that he does not understand even if he uses all of his ratio. Kazimoto who at first feels malicious joy in watching the bee struggling for life but then, moved by sympathy, draws it out of water, stands for the moodiness of fate, or arbitrariness of God or any powerful higher being.²¹ It is an allegory about Man being thrown into existence (what Nietzsche calls *Geworfenheit*), about the arbitrariness of death and the

²¹ As Kezilahabi stated in an interview, he was sympathizing with atheism when he wrote *Kichwamaji* (Kanyarukiga 1981: 489).

search for meaning, all of them frequently recurring points of reference in Kezilahabi's philosophy.²²

A3 This allegory is an explicit one. The first person narrator calls the observation *mfano* (example)²³ and transfers it in the following reflection to a second level of meaning: *kumsaidia mwanadamu kuelewa fumbo la Mungu* (to help Man understand the mystery of God). Thus, the access to this second level of meaning is possible when reading the allegory for the first time.²⁴

A4. In line three, the bee as *mdudu* (insect) becomes a creature that is able to lose its hope (*kukata tamaa*). This tendency to personification is confirmed by the comparison *kama mtu anayekata roho* (like a Man who is dying). The personification of the bee causes Kazimoto's sympathy, and in the following his reflections on his own identity switch from *ni-* (I) to *mungu mdogo* (a small god).

4.1.3. The hawk and the chicken

[Rosa na Flora w]alipofika nyumbani walimkuta Bigeyo akiwangojea, kwani Rosa alikuwa amemwambia aje amnyoe.

Walikuwa wamekaa kivulini chini ya mchungwa Regina alikuwa akifua nguo za Rosa Mkasi ulilia, "Kacha kacha, kachu" juu ya kichwa cha Rosa Rosa alikuwa akijitazama ndani ya kioo kila wakati, alimwongoza Bigeyo asijekata [sic] sana nywele zake za mbele karibu na uso Stella aliona kitu fulani kinashuka kasi sana. Alipiga kelele hali akitupa mikono juu.

"Swa! Swa! Swa!"

Wengine pia waliamka na kupiga kelele. Kazi bure. Kifaranga kimoja kilikwenda kinaning'inia kati ya kucha za mwewe. Walibakia kuhesabu vilivyosalia.

"Vilikuwa kumi. Sasa vimebaki vitatu!" Flora alishangaa. Rosa alikaa chini tena kunyolewa. Muda si mrefu mwewe alirudi Safari hii Honorata ndiye alikuwa wa kwanza kumwona.

"Swa! Swa! Swa!" alitupa mikono juu, "Swa!" Mwewe alikuwa amekwisha chukua kifaranga kingine. Zamu hii hakuenda mbali Alitua juu ya mti karibu na mji. Wasichana walianza kumtupia mawe lakini hayakumfikia Mwewe alikula kifaranga bila kujali. Alipomaliza aliruka kwa raha ya shibe Vifaranga vilibaki viwili Ilionekana kama hata mwewe alifahamu kwamba huu ulikuwa mji wa wanawake (Rosa Mistika: 22)

When Rosa and Flora reached home they met Bigeyo waiting for them, for Rosa had told her to come and cut their hair.

They were sitting in the shadow under an orange tree. Regina was washing Rosa's clothes. The scissors snapped, "Kacha kacha, kachu" on top of Rosa's head. Rosa was watching herself in the mirror all of the time, leading Bigeyo not to cut much of the front hair near her face. Stella saw something moving very fast downwards. She shouted while throwing her arms in the air.

"Swa! Swa! Swa!"

The others also rose and shouted. Useless. One chick was gone, hanging down in the claws of a hawk. They remained counting the left ones

²² Interestingly, Kanyarukiga has interpreted this allegory as an appeal against a fatalistic attitude towards life (ibidem: 359).

²³ *Mfano*, further determined as *mfano wa maneno*, forms the equivalent of parable (cf. amongst others Höftmann & Herms 2000: 199)

²⁴ As to the motif of the bee, we can state that it is also found in Matiasi Myampala's poem *Nyuki ni mtaalamu* (Knappert 1979: 281)

"They were ten. Now there are only three!" Flora was astonished. Rosa sat down again to get her hair cut. After a short while the hawk returned. This time Honorata was the first to see it.

"*Swa! Swa! Swa!*", she threw her arms in the air. "*Swa!*" The hawk had already taken another chick. This time it did not fly far away. It settled on a tree close to the courtyard. The girls began to throw stones at it but they did not reach it. The hawk ate the chick without taking heed. When he finished it flew away with the joy of satisfaction. There were two chicks left. It seemed as if even the hawk knew that this was a women's courtyard. [translation L. D.]

A1. The form of this allegory is narration with one sentence in direct speech. The interference of several onomatopoeica creates a certain figurativeness.

A2. As a second level of meaning we can interpret that a women's compound (*mji wa wanawake*) in danger cannot defend itself. As the hidden meaning behind the hawk we can interpret the world of men that threatens Zakaria's family with his adolescent daughters.²⁵ The girls themselves and their mother are not able to defend themselves on their own, and – in a concrete sense – Zakaria who is always drunk cannot avoid his daughters getting unwanted pregnancies. This vivid scene, read as an allegory about the situation of the family, anticipates the further course of the plot. This becomes more apparent when reading the novel several times.²⁶ On a higher level of abstraction, this text passage can be called an allegory of defencelessness.²⁷

What is remarkable about this scene is that we find it in the beginning of the novel. From a hermeneutical point of view we can say that an undefined bad fate is alluded to the reader. As the reader cannot know what kind of bad fate this might be, a certain narrative tension is created which leads to the continuation of reading.

A3. The allegory found here is a merely implicit one. There are no preceding explanations, only the last sentence indicates an allegory, but not explicitly. By this sentence, the reader can recognize the scene as having a hidden meaning, but one cannot presuppose that it is understood as an allegory when reading it for the first time.

A4. Concerning the hawk, *bila kujali* (without taking heed [of them]) and *kwa raha ya shibe* (with the joy of satisfaction) are indicators of personification. –

²⁵ This corresponds to the spontaneous interpretative assumption of Prof. Mulokozi (Interview Prof. Mulokozi). The same meaning is found in Interview Joram.

²⁶ Mlacha interprets *mji wa wanawake* (women's compound) as "the representatives of the traditional society, which is seen being weaker when faced by the foreign culture" (Mlacha 1988: 152; cf. also 153-155). In my view this reading neglects the masculine – feminine dimension.

²⁷ The motif hawk and chicks or chicken is established in the Swahili *methali* (proverb) *Dua la kuku halimpati mwewe* (A chicken's prayer does not reach the hawk) which convenes to the allegory exposed here. In Interviews Geoffrey and Mngodo, the interviewed cited this proverb as a spontaneous reaction to the text passage. Cf. Scheven (1977: 96) who points out a political reading of this proverb and concludes that *kuku* should stand for "common man".

It is also interesting to note that we find this motif in the poem *Song of Chicken* (1981) by the Malawian poet Jack Mapanje in which he criticises the abuse of political power.

Interestingly, there is an intertextual relationship to a passage in *Gamba la Nyoka* where the same motif reoccurs. Co-text is the sudden death of a patient in a dispensary that makes all the other patients freeze with fear:

Kimya! Wadi zima lilikuwa kimya kama vifaranga vitishwayo na kivuli cha mwewe. Kifo! Neno 'kifo' liliwakumbusha majeraha yao. (Gamba la Nyoka: 33)

Quiet! The whole ward was as quiet as chicks frightened by a hawk's shadow. Death! The word 'death' reminded them of their wounds. [translation I. D.]

Here the hawk explicitly becomes a metaphor for death.

4.1.4. The injured bird

Ndege mmoja aliyekuwa amevunjwa mguu kwa jiwe la manati alikuwa akiruka juu angani kwa kasi sana kuokoa maisha yake. Aliruka juu sana na kuwakatisha tamaa watoto waliokuwa wakipiga kelele wakintegemea kuanguka chini. Lakini hakufika mbali sana mbawa zake zilipochoka. Alihitaji kupumzika. Karibu naye aliona mti mrefu wa aina ya mvule. Alitua. Lakini hakuweza kusimama juu ya mguu mmoja Polepole alitelema [sic] chini. Alijiona anaanguka chini. Alijikaza. Alijaribu kuruka tena. Alitua juu ya majani mengi ya mwembe. Hapa alipumzika kwa maumivu katika kifua chake juu ya majani. (Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo: 3)

A bird that had broken its leg by a stone from a catapult was flying very fast up in the sky to save its life. It flew very high disappointing the children who were making noise, expecting it to fall down. But it did not reach very far when its wings got tired. It needed to rest. Nearby it saw a tall teak tree. It settled. But it could not stand on one foot. Slowly it descended. It found itself falling down. It made an effort. It tried to fly again. It settled on many leaves of a mango tree. It rested here on the leaves due to the pain in its chest. [translation I. D.]

A1. This allegory forms the narrative exposition of the novel.

A2. The vivid description (*kuokoa maisha yake* – to save its life; *alijiona anaanguka chini* – it found itself falling down; *maumivu katika kifua chake* – pain in its chest) and its position right at the beginning of the novel suggest to us that we can undertake an allegorical reading of this scene.

This bird injured by children whose escape is described in such a detailed way, anticipates a disharmony on the narrative level which can not be specified by the reader (as these are the first sentences of the novel). By this disharmony, the reader is stimulated to continue reading. A certain atmosphere is created.

Having read the whole novel whose fundamental idea and title *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* and its consequences are discussed by the protagonists Dennis and Tumaini, we reach the following allegorical reading: the bird represents Man, thrown into our world of chaos. By the insight in the senselessness of world and life, Man is deprived of one foot (on the ground) and is thus not able to continue his life unscathed. He has only one foot left as he is burdened by the question of meaning (of life). Following this interpretation, this allegory anticipates one of the philosophical themes of the novel. The injured bird, removed from the reader's eye, evokes the following question: will it survive despite its strong pain? The surviving Dennis and the death of Tumaini at the end of the novel give the two possible answers.

A3. We can hold that there is a high degree of implicitness in this allegory. Firstly, we do not find didactic or explanatory additions (like in allegories which are close to parables). Secondly, the access to the allegorical level of meaning of the scene is only possible after reading the whole novel (preferably several times).

A4. The focusing of the narrative perspective on the bird by indicators like *aliona* (it saw) and *maumivu katika kifua chake* (pain in its chest) creates a tendency towards personification. This makes the interpretation of the bird as a human being possible –

Some pages later (p. 4f.) we find a chicken with an injured leg, so that we can talk of a certain continuity of the bird motif

4.2. Allegories with other motifs

4.2.1. The blank piece of paper / The black board

Mwishowe ilikuwa zamu ya mzee kuingia Mzee alichukua fimbo yake. Alijaribu kufungua mlango, mlango ukamshinda Msichana huyu, aliyekuwa bado ameweka kitambaa juu ya pua yake, alicheka machozi yakamtoka. Niliinuka kumsaidia. Alipoingia nilirudi tena kwenye nafasi yangu. Nilikuwa bado sijakaa nilipomwona yule mzee akisukumwa nje. Mkuu wa Wilaya sikuweza kumwona, kwani baada ya kumsukuma yule mzee nje alirudi ndani upesi kama popo aogopaye jua [...] Mzee alipotolewa nje alikuwa kama mtu mwenye wazimu. Alikuwa akitetemeka kwa woga. Alitembea kwa haraka kutoka nje. Moyo wangu ulivurugika kwa mchanganyiko wa hasira na huzuni nilipoona mzee akikimbia Serikali yake. Mzee alipokuwa akitoka nje sikuona kitu kingine isipokuwa kwamba wazee walikuwa wakitukimbia. Uhusiano kati yao nasi ulikuwa ukikatika. Niliona wazazi wakiwakimbia watoto wao ambao sasa walikuwa kama simba Kwa kuwa mzee huyu alikuwa amevaa shati ambalo lilikuwa limepasuka mgongoni niliweza kuona mgongo wake vizuri sana. Kweli niliona wazee wakitupa migongo. Mgongo wa mzee huyu sasa ulikuwa kama ukurasa ambao haukuandikwa maneno; ulikuwa kama ubao mweusi uliofutwa upande mmoja. Maneno yaliyokuwa yameandikwa upande mwingine sikuweza kuyasoma. Mawazo haya yalikuwa bado yakinizunguka [...] (Kichwamaji: 7)²⁸

In the end it was the old man's turn to go in. The old man took his stick. He tried to open the door, but he failed. This girl who still had a cloth on her nose, laughed until she was in tears. I rose to help him. When he entered I returned to my place. I had not yet sat down when I saw the old man being pushed outside. I could not see the District Commissioner, because after pushing that old man outside he returned inside fast like a bat that is afraid of the sun. [...] When the old man was thrown out he was like a mad man. He was shivering with fear. He walked hastily to get outside. My heart was stirred by a mixture of anger and pity when I saw the old man running away from his government. When the old man was going outside I did not see anything other than [the fact] that the old people were running away from us. The relationship between us was being cut. I saw parents running away from their children that were now like lions. As the old man was dressed in a shirt which was torn on the back I could see his back very well. Indeed I saw the old people turning their backs on us. This old man's back now was like a piece of paper on which no words were written; it was like a blackboard which had been wiped off on one side. I could not read the words that had been written on the other side. These thoughts were still moving within me [...] [translation L. D.]

A1. Formally, there is no indication of allegory as the passage is embedded into the narration.

A2. The observations made by the first-person narrator (first level of meaning) are transferred – in the text – to a second level of meaning which can be described as the following: The

²⁸ Mlacha (1988: 151f.) only cites the underlined sentences and stresses the quasi-cinematographic character of this passage.

blank piece of paper which Kazimoto looks at alludes to the gap between two generations that have alienated from one another and do not understand each other any more.²⁹ The conflict that arises between these two generations exists between the village-based traditional way of life of the parents and their children who are exposed to 'modern' (European) influence by means of town-based education in schools and universities.³⁰ The importance of education in this conflict is reflected in another element of this allegory: *ubao mweusi uliofutwa upande mmoja* (a blackboard which was wiped off on one side). The implication [school] is given; this implication is modified, as we are stimulated to pose the following questions: what had been written on this board? Why was it wiped off? It is also interesting to note that Kazimoto, by stating that he cannot read the words on the other side (of the board, of the sheet, of the old man's back), approves the existence of these words (without being able to see them).

A3. The allegory is marked as an explicit one by the relation of analogy between the central elements *mgongo wa mzee* (the old man's back), *ukurasa ambao haukuandikwa maneno* (the piece of paper on which no words are written) and *ubao mweusi* (blackboard). –

Interestingly, the motif *ubao mweusi* recurs in the end of the novel.

"[...] kichwa cha binadamu ni kama ubao mweusi. Unafahamu wazi kwamba juu ya ubao mweusi unaweza kuandika cho chote kile upendacho. Ndivyo vichwa vya wanadamu vilivyo. Amekuja Yesu akaandika maneno yake. Amekuja Muhammad na wengineo, wao pia wameandika maneno yao. Kila mmoja akijaribu kufuta yale ya mwenziwe. Wataalamu wa sayansi pia hufanya vivi hivi juu ya vichwa vya wanadamu." (Kichwamaji: 208)

"[...] the human head is like a blackboard. You understand very well that on a blackboard, you can write anything you like. That is how human beings' heads are. Jesus came and wrote his words. Mohamed and others came, and they also wrote their words. Every one of them tried to wipe off the words of the other. The scholars and scientists are also doing exactly the same to the human beings' heads. [translation L. D.]

Adding to the implications given above, we encounter here a reflection about two major aspects: firstly, the infinity of writing words (ideas) into people's minds, and secondly, inherent to the first one, the passivity and powerlessness of human beings being confronted with these ideas. By this we can interpret this passage as a form of ideology criticism: it is a warning of human beings' minds being exposed to ideas without any protection. Whoever wants to, can "inscribe" his / her words and thus ideas and ideologies into people's minds.³¹

²⁹ As an abstraction of the generation conflict exposed here, this mutual non-understanding can be called "giza ya mtu mwingine" ("The darkness of another person"; Interview Joram). It could also be applied to other aspects like for instance *viongozi – wananchi* (leaders – citizen) or *wanawake – wanaume* (women – men; Interview Mngodo).

³⁰ This is one of several examples contradicting the criticism holding that Kezilahabi would not treat the "real" problems of Tanzanian society (cf. Senkoro 1987, pp. 29f.; referring to *Kichwamaji* and *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*). Critics of African Literature often postulate that African authors *have to* highlight problems of society. In my view, it is not helpful to tell authors what kind of themes they should write about (cf. Schulze-Engler 1993: 15; 21-23).

³¹ In our interview, Prof. Mulokozi called this human "openness" "*dosari ya binadamu*" (a human defect). However, a more positive reading of *ubao mweusi* is also possible. It can be interpreted as the human potential to forget bad things in the past and to continue to learn something new (Interview Yahya-Othman). *Uba mweusi* can also be related to the proverb *Akili ni nywele kila mtu ana zake* (Mind is like hair, every Man has got his / her own; Interview Sekwiha).

By this a competitive struggle emerges between the ones who "write"; this struggle is held on the back (*mgongo*) of the concerned.

4.2.2. The king with large ears

"Wazee wenzangu, vijana na wanakijiji mليونichagua kuongoza mkutano huu ambao utakata shauri juu ya maisha yetu ya baadaye, ninayo machache ya kusema. Nitaaanza na hadithi fupi niliyosimuliwa na mtoto wangu asomaye shuleni.

Zamani za kale palikuwa na mfalme mmoja mwenye masikio makubwa kama ya punda, naye kila siku, usiku na mchana, alikuwa amefunga nguo kubwa kuzunguka kichwa chake ili masikio yake makubwa yasionekane. Lakini baadaye nyewe [sic] zilimzidi akalazimika kutafuta kinyozi Kinyozi alipatikana, naye alilazimika kutoa ahadi kwanza kwamba hata sema cho chote juu ya kitu cha ajabu ambacho angeona kwa mfalme. Akisema kitu hiki, adhabu ni upanga wa chakari. Kinyozi alimnyoa mfalme kwenye chumba cha siri na ilimlazimu kuvumilia sana kutocheka wakati wote wa kazi yake.

Baada ya kunyolewa, mfalme akifunga tena kitambaa chake na kinyozi akaenda kwake nyumbani. Huko nyumbani kinyozi alishindwa kukaa na siri hii peke yake moyoni mwake Moyo ulitaka kumong'onezea mke wake lakini ulishindwa kwa kuogopa upanga wa chakari. Mwishowe kinyozi alishindwa kabisa kuvumilia. Alikwenda mbali msituni. Na huko msituni alichimba shimo dogo ardhini, kisha aliinama na kuweka mdomo wake kwenye mlango wa shimo na kunong'ona kwa sauti ya chini kabisa, "Mfalme ana masikio makubwa." Kwisha kusema maneno haya alilifukia tena shimo hilo akaenda zake. Moyo wake ukawa umeridhika – angalau alisema Baada ya miaka, mti uliota pale penye shimo. Mti huu ulikua, na ulipokua upepo ukawa unavuma na kupita kati ya matawi yake madogo. Upepo huu ulipopita, matawi yalitoa sauti na kuimba. "Mfalme ana masikio makubwa." Sauti hii ilisikika kwanza kwa mtu mmoja, baadaye kwa watu wengi na mwishowe nchi nzima ikawa imefahamu."

"Ndugu zangu wanakijiji. Kama miti inatoa sauti itingishwapo na upepo, na majani hutoa mlilo wakati wa upepo mkali, hapana shaka jambo tutakalojadili hapa litakuja julikana [sic]." (Gamba la Nyoka: 14f)

"My dear elders, young people and villagers (you) who have chosen me to lead this meeting which will take a decision about our future life, I have a few words to say. I will start with a short tale which I was told by my school-going child.

In very old times there was a king who had large ears like a donkey, and every day, night and day, he wrapped big cloths around his head so that his large ears would not be seen. But later his hair got too long and he was obliged to search for a barber. The barber was found, and he had to promise at first that he would not say anything about the miraculous thing he would see at the king's. If he told [anyone] about this thing, his punishment would be the executioner's sword. The barber did the king's hair in a secret room and he had to stand a lot not to laugh the whole time while he was doing his work. After having his hair cut, the king tightened again his cloth, and the barber went home. There at home the barber could not keep this secret for himself. His heart wanted to whisper to his wife but it couldn't because it feared the executioner's sword. In the end the barber could not stand it anymore. He went far into the forest. And there in the forest, he dugged a small hole in the ground, then he bent down, put his mouth on the opening of the hole and whispered in the slightest voice, "The king has large ears." When he had finished saying these words he covered that hole again and went his way. His heart was satisfied – at least he thought so. After some years a tree grew where the hole was. This tree grew, and when it grew, the wind was blowing and passing through its small branches. When the wind passed, the branches produced sound and sang: "The king has large ears." This voice was first heard by one man, afterwards by many people and in the end the whole country new."

"My comrade villagers. Just like the trees producing sound when they are moved by the wind; and the leaves do cry when there is strong wind, there is no doubt that the matter we are going to discuss here will come to be known [translation L. D.]

A1. The form of this allegory is introduced to the reader as *hadithi fupi*³² *niliyosimuliwa na mitoto wangu asomaye shuleni* (a short tale which I was told by my school-going child)³³ It is embedded in direct speech.

A2. On the surface, it is a humoristic story: the king who is ashamed of his big ears confesses himself to his barber who cannot keep the secret, despite the threat to be cut off the head. On the second level of meaning the story tells us about human talkativeness in general and about human unreliability to keep a secret.³⁴ The 'moral' of this *hadithi* is close to the respective of the proverb *Hapana siri ya watu wawili* (A secret is no secret anymore when known by two persons; Farsi 1958: 10).³⁵

A3. In the last section, the narrator makes the allegorical character of the passage explicit: *Kama miti inatoa sauti [...] hapana shaka jambo tutakalojadili hapa litakuja julikana* (Just like the trees producing sound [...] there is no doubt that the matter we are going to discuss here will come to be known). The same fate is predicted for the results of the secret meetings, as it was the case for the king's secret. Even though the central sequence is not introduced by *ninaweza kukueleza kwa hadithi* (I can explain it to you by a tale), one can assume *nitaanza na hadithi* (I will start with a short tale) in the co-text of the secret gathering as a signal to give this story more than one meaning.

A4. This allegory is very close to a parable. The 'moral' can be described as "Keep a secret by being silent like a grave!" A message like the following can also be traced: "Man is simply not able to keep a secret".

4.2.3. Falling leaves / A grain of sand in the desert

"Zamani," Dennis alisema, "hata mimi nilifikiri kwamba maisha mazuri sana, na kwamba watu wema huenda mbinguni, lakini sasa nina mawazo tofauti kabisa na yale ya zamani. Ulimwengu siku hizi ninauona kama meza – kama meza hii ya kulia unayoiona sasa. Sisi wanadamu tu kama majani. Tunaanguka kutoka juu mtini, tunakuja tunapepea angani kama unyoya namna hii na kuanguka juu ya meza ta! Hakuna atakayerudi juu mtini. Tunao uwezo mdogo wa kutenda mambo na kujipatia furaha angalau kwa sekunde moja. Lakini yote tunayoweza kutenda ukilinganisha na wakati usioweza kushindika ni kama kubeba punje moja ya mchanga kutoka jangwani na kujidai mbele ya ulimwengu" (*Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 93)

"In former times," Dennis said, "even me I thought that life is very nice, and that good people go to heaven; but now I have got completely different thoughts than that former ones. Nowadays I see the world as a table – like this dining table that you're seeing now. We human beings are just like leaves. We fall down from the tree; we come down and float in the air like a feather, and then we fall on the table ta!

³² "Short tale", not to be confused with the genre of short story.

³³ We can read this inversion of the normally expected (a school child telling a tale instead of an old person) as a subtle irony concerning the relationship of tradition and so-called modern education.

³⁴ Note the irony of the wind and the trees – not the barber! – being 'guilty' of this talkativeness.

³⁵ As I was told by Hassan Adam, there is a very interesting intertextual relationship to the Swahili tale *Sultani aliyekuwa na pembe*, which he was told by his grandmother in Tanga. The sultan who cannot avoid his secret being known has to accept the moral *Dunia haina siri* (Hassan Adam 1993: 156). Furthermore, this motif of large ears can be traced back to the Greek myth of King Midas (Thomas Geider, personal communication).

There is no one who will return to the tree. We have got a small potential of doing things and obtaining happiness for at least a second. But if you compare all of that we can do with time that cannot be overcome, it is like carrying one grain of sand out of the desert and boasting with it in front of the world."
[translation L. D.]

A1. Formally, we find direct speech that is part of a dialogue. The allegory is split into two parts making use of the two different images.

A2. From the first level of meaning (leaves falling from a tree) we can interpret as a second level of meaning the unavoidable course of human life.

"*Ukifariki huwezi tena kurudi kwenye tumbo la mama yako. Kuna maoni mengi kwamba mtu hafi, anakwenda sehemu fulani, lakini kwa macho yetu, mtu anapokufa amekufa, ndio mwisho wake*"
(Interview Joram)

"If you die you cannot return into the belly of your mother. There are many opinions that [say that] Man does not die, that she / he goes to a certain place, but in our eyes, when Man dies she / he is dead, this indeed is his / her end." [translation L. D.]

The allegory obtains an extension of both levels of meaning by *unyoya* (feather), which in contrast to *majani* (leaves) on the first level, stresses more the aspect of floating (*tunapepea*). On the second level of meaning the fragile human condition of being exposed to all kinds of fate is stressed, and also the fact that Man cannot direct his life (as she / he wants to).³⁶ Another important aspect of this allegory is the motif *Hakuna atakayerudi juu mtini* (There is no one who will return to the tree). Here one can trace as a second level of meaning the expulsion from paradise. –

As to the allegory of carrying a grain of sand out of the desert (first level of meaning), we can interpret as a second level of meaning the limited number of (good) deeds in one human being's lifetime. If you compare these deeds to eternity, they seem to be minute and void.³⁷

A3. The second level of meaning is indicated explicitly to the reader by *Ulimwengu [...]* *ninauona kama meza* (I see the world as a table) and *sisi wanadamu tu kama majani* (We human beings are just like leaves). For the second part of the allegory, we find the explanation *yote tunayoweza kutenda ukilinganisha na wakati usioweza kushindika* (if you compare all that we can do with time that cannot be overcome) before the central passage which is linked by *ni kama* (it is like).

A4. In this case, the personification *majani* (leaves) – *wanadamu* (human beings) is obvious. The allegory derives its aesthetic potential from describing leaves with the pronominal prefixes *tu-* (1st Pers. Pl.; thrice) and *a-* (1st Pers. Sg.) only used for human beings and animals. Furthermore, the inclusive *tu-* extends the personification effect to the reader.

³⁶ Ohly (1981: 73) interprets this aspect as if it serves as an excuse for Man not to take his / her responsibilities. In my opinion, the opposite is the case: as this imagery is derived from nature, a certain naturalness of human limits is indicated. Every human being has got individual responsibility, but the influence of his deeds is as limited as his lifetime.

³⁷ Note the remark in Interview with Dr. Kahigi: If every human being carried one grain of sand out of the desert, what would be the problem then?

4.2.4. The traveller in the evening wind

1	Upepo wa jioni ulivuma	<i>The evening wind was blowing</i>
	Msafiri akasikia karakacha	<i>when the traveller heard a strange noise</i>
	Akatazama nyuma	<i>Turned around</i>
	Hakuona kitu.	<i>but did not see a thing</i>
5	Akakaza mwendo	<i>He quickened his step</i>
	Mbele kidogo akakuta maiti	<i>A little ahead he found a corpse</i>
	Akasimama.	<i>And stood still.</i>
	(<i>Kichwamaji</i> : 218)	[translation L. D.]

A1. Formally, we find a *shairi* composed in free verse. Its setting is at the very end of the novel, so it has got the character of an epilogue.

A2. The second level of meaning of this passage can be interpreted as the following. First and foremost, *upepo wa jioni* (evening wind) gives us a dark mood, and the reader is puzzled by the ambiguity of the traveller (who is she/he? where does she/he travel to?). The onomatopoetic *karakacha*, a noise the origin of which cannot be found out by the traveller, also concerns the reader who, as if spellbound, accompanies the traveller quickening his step. The corpse he finds ahead raises the question: who is the deceased? Is it the traveller himself or another traveller (Interview Prof Yahya-Othman); is it Kazimoto or another character of the novel?

An unspecified traveller finds an unspecified corpse – is it about Man and death in general? May this poem be an allegory of human life as a journey that can end abruptly every day?

We can hold that this *shairi*, read as an allegory, comprises a condensed version of the philosophy presented to us in *Kichwamaji* that can be labelled existentialist.³⁸ To fit into a certain logic inherent to this philosophy, line 6 has to mention *maiti* (corpse) or any term forming part of the semantic field *kifo* (death), but this logic only results out of reading the whole novel (Interview Dr. Kahigi).

On a meta-level we can also relate this allegory to the whole process of reading the novel: after the reader (*msafiri* – traveller) has finished reading the novel, he is confronted with Kazimoto's corpse (Interview Dr. Kahigi).

A3. It is an implicit allegory. It is explained neither before nor afterwards. An attentive reading will consider Kazimoto's death shortly before as a co-text which is crucial to the understanding of the second level of meaning

³⁸ The philosophy represented especially in *Kichwamaji* – as Kezilahabi stated himself – has been influenced by the reading of existentialist authors like Camus and Beckett. Even though, this aspect has been given too much attention neglecting Kezilahabi's originality (cf. amongst others Bertoncini 1989: 108f, Ekholm 1984: 35). We have to keep in mind that death is also omnipresent in Aniceti Kitereza's *magnum opus*. Both of the authors reflect the thematic complex of death which apparently is a main theme in Kerewe philosophy (Interview Muumba)

A4. This allegory is close to an enigma. Even though the identity of traveller and corpse may be more or less found out, the question remains: what kind of strange noise was that? Who or what was the cause?

5. The (whole) novels read as allegories

Based on the premise that every text can be read allegorically, we would like to analyse here apart from the text passages under discussion, if and how every single novel on the whole can be read as an allegory. The metaphorical character of the titles of the novels will not be discussed here.³⁹

5.1. *Rosa Mistika*

If we consider the whole context of the novel, this story about the failed emancipation of a young woman in the Tanzania of the 1960s can be read as an allegory of the fatal effects of authoritarian education and restrictive norms in society. On a more personal level, *Rosa Mistika* would be an allegory about how the opportunity of a human being to find its place in life is destroyed by social constraints and strokes of fate.

5.2. *Kichwamaji*

As the story of a young Tanzanian, who feels torn by university education and modern influence on the one hand, and Christianity and cultural tradition on the other, *Kichwamaji*⁴⁰ can be read as an allegory of alienation and of questioning the meaning of life.

"*Msomi wa Kiafrika ni Kichwamaji. Amechanganyikiwa katika kichwa chake kwa sababu ya kupokea vitu vingi kutoka nje imani, lugha, mila, na kadhalika. Ametekwa na mambo ya kigeni kwa kiasi kikubwa. Namna ya kichaa. Ndiyo [Kezilahabi] anamwita Kichwamaji.*" (Interview Prof. Mulokozi)

"The African intellectual is a *Kichwamaji*. He is puzzled in his mind because of receiving many things from outside: faith, language, customs, etc. Foreign things to a great extent conquer him. Like insanity. So in this sense [Kezilahabi] calls him *Kichwamaji*" [translation L. D.]

This allegory about the situation of African intellectuals is current even today.⁴¹

5.3. *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*

Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo as the story of two very different biographies in the beginning of the Tanzanian *ujamaa* era can be read as an allegory on the philosophical motif of *contemptus*

³⁹ I have dwelt upon these aspects in Diegner 2001: 89-96.

⁴⁰ Originally, Kezilahabi wanted to call the novel *Nunda* (Beast of prey), then *Kazimoto* (the protagonist's name), before deciding to call it *Kichwamaji* (Interview with the author in Kanyurukiga 1981: 493).

⁴¹ Cf. Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2000: 4f. who draws our attention to the paradox of a great number of African intellectuals who are not able even to summarize their scientific work in their mother tongue or any other African language.

mundi (contempt for the world).⁴² Thus the novel also becomes an allegory on the painful experience of moral ambiguity.

It is very interesting that the title appears three times in the novel – at the beginning, in the middle, and in the end – illustrating different aspects of its meaning.

a) "Ni kweli kwamba duniani ni uwanja wa fujo, lakini kila mwanadamu ameumbwa ili aufaidi kiasi awezavyo." (*Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: p. 8)

"It is true that the world is a place of chaos; but every human being has been created to benefit as much as one can." [translation L. D.]

b) "Tumaini!" Dennis alisema, "Usinione hivi nilivyo ukafikiri kwamba mimi ni mtu mwenye furaha hapa duniani Nina ta[a]bu zangu ambazo labda wewe huwezi kuelewa. [...] Lakini sasa ninaamini kwamba **Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo**. Kila mwanadamu ameumbwa kufanya fujo yake halafu anajiondokea na kupotea. Kuna fujo za aina nyingi. Watu wengine wamefanya fujo zaidi ya wengine. [...]" (*Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: p. 92; emphasis by the author)

"Tumaini! Dennis said, "Don't see me like this, thinking of me as a Man having pleasure here in this world. I've got my problems which you might not be able to understand. [...] But now I believe that **the World is a Place of Chaos**. Every human being has been created to cause a chaos of one's own, then one goes away and gets lost. There are many kinds of chaos. Some people have caused more chaos than others [...]" [translation L. D.]

c) "Unamwona mji hii huyo! [...] Hana mkia lakini bado anapenda kuishi. Ndivyo nasi tulivyo Huu unaweza ukawa ni mwanzo tu wa ta[a]bu mpya. Hivyo ndivyo ulimwengu ulivyo - Uwanja wa fujo Na katika fujo hii sisi twapenda kuishi" (*Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: p. 163; cf. 4.1.2)

"Look at that lizard! [...] He has no tail but he still likes to live. That is how we are. This can be the very beginning of new problems. This is how the world is – a place of chaos. And in this chaos we like to live in." [translation L. D.]

The world as a place of chaos, confusion and quarrel is elaborated in the following way: Every human being is ruthlessly pursuing her / his own interests and wants to live a better life than others (Interview Muumba). However, there are big differences as to the damages that are caused by this attitude (Interview Sekwiha). The decisive point is what consequence is drawn out of this: either one is desperate because of the contempt of the world, or one opts for an imperative "Nevertheless!" (Cf. the criticism in Madumulla 1993: 148f. and Mulokozi 1976). As we have stated above, in this novel the first option of *contemptus mundi* is much more present.

5.4. *Gamba la Nyoka*

As it is more difficult to read *Gamba la Nyoka* as an allegory, we shall consider the following text passage. As a detail of describing everyday life in an *ujamaa* village, we are told that

⁴² Cf. Wamitila 1998: 80 who points out that this motif is not very much appreciated by a number of literary critics. This fact was also confirmed in some of the interviews. Besides the literary interpretation, Kezilahabi's world view which is supposed to be of one-sided negativity keeps on provoking objection: *Kati ya amani kuna vita, kati ya uhai kuna kifo, na katika fujo kuna salama na kufurahia maisha* (In the middle of peace there is war, in the middle of vitality there is death, and inside of chaos there is calm and enjoying life; Interview Yahya-Othman; cf. also Interviews Mulokozi and Kahigi).

people are now washing themselves behind newly built walls and not in public at the well or at the riverbank. Mzee Chilongo rejects this like all other changes.

"Mimi siwezi kukoga nyumbani kama mgonjwa!" alisema mzee Chilongo mbele ya wake zake, "nataka kukoga mtoni kwenye maji yatembeayo, mtoni kwenye samaki na nyoka! Nataka kukoga ziwani kwenye mamba! Mimi sijawa mzee kiasi cha kuletewa maji ya kukoga uani!"

Kesho yake asubuhi mzee Chilongo alionekana akitembea na fimbo yake begani kuelekea mtoni, hali akizungumza peke yake. Alikuwa anakwenda kukoga. Alipofika mto hakukuta mtu mwingine kama alivyotegemea. Peke yake katika baridi ya asubuhi, alivua nguo akaziweka kwenye jiwe, akayaendea maji. Alikuwa hajaina kuyashika maji alipoona nyoka mkubwa juu ya miti midogo midogo iliyokuwa karibu na mto. Mzee Chilongo alishtuka. Alisahau fimbo yake, na bila kutambua kuwa alikuwa uchi alianza kutimua mbio kwa woga. Hakufika mbali akatambua hali yake. Alirudi pole pole akiokota kila jiwe aliloliona mbele yake. Alipoyakaribia tena maji alianza kuliponda lile joka kwa hasira. Jiwe la tatu lililimpiga yule nyoka kakatika sehemu mbili. Lakini nyoka hakutingishika. Mzee Chilongo alitambua - Lililikuwa gamba la nyoka. Alianza kujicheka mwenyewe kabla ya kuanza kukoga

Hivyo ndivyo ilivyokuwa kwa mzee Chilongo na wengine wa aina yake. Jamii ilikuwa imemwacha nyuma. Jamii ilikuwa imejinyumbua na sasa haikuwa pale alipokuwa. Ukale una wakati wake. Ukale unastahili kuchunguzwa; lakini haudumu milele. (Gamba la Nyoka: 149f)

"Me, I can't wash myself at home like a sick man!" said Mzee Chilongo in front of his wives, "I want to wash myself in the river where the water is flowing, in the river where fish and snakes are! I want to wash myself in the lake where crocodiles are! I am not yet such an old man that needs to be brought water to wash oneself in the courtyard!"

The following morning Mzee Chilongo was seen walking to the river with his stick on the shoulder, talking to himself. He was going to wash himself. When he got to the river he did not meet another person as he had expected to. All alone in the morning cold, he undressed himself and put his clothes on a stone, and got into the water. He had not yet bent down to touch the water when he saw a big snake sitting on some small bushes near to the river. Mzee Chilongo was startled. He forgot his stick, and without realizing that he was naked he began to run away with fear. He had not reached far when he recognized his state. He walked back slowly picking up every stone he saw in front of him. When he approached the water again he began to attack the huge snake with anger. The third stone hit the snake so that it broke into two pieces. But the snake did not move. Mzee Chilongo recognized – it was a snake's skin. He began to laugh at himself before he began to wash himself.

This is the way it was for Mzee Chilongo and others of his kind. Society left him behind. Society had stretched itself and now it was no longer there where he was. The past has its time. The past is worth being studied; but it does not last forever. [translation L. D.]

A1. The form of this allegory is an introductory dialogue that is followed by narration. Thus there is no formal indicator of allegoricity.

A2. The first level of meaning comprises the behaviour of Chilongo: firstly he awkwardly objects to the community, then pretends not to be afraid of anything, and finally he fights against a phantom, against something which is not existing. The second level of meaning can be interpreted as an irony about the useless rebellion of a single person against society.

A3. As an indicator of the allegoricity of this passage we can have a look on the last paragraph. The formula *hivyo ndivyo ilivyokuwa* (this is the way it was) serves as an introduction to the key words of an allegorical reading of this passage: *Ukale una wakati wake* (The past has its time). By this remark, we can classify this allegory as an explicit one that can be recognized when reading it for the first time. For the purpose of going into greater detail, we have to look at the central element of this allegory, which is the title of the whole novel: *gamba la nyoka* (a snake's skin). If we read this element as a metaphor, we come to the

following conclusion: At first, we have the naturalness of a snake shedding its skin and the absence of existential danger of this procedure (it continues to live). Secondly, the mere skin of a snake is not dangerous for Man. These two elements are related to the development of society: *Jamii ilikuwa imejinyumbua na sasa haikuwa pale alipokuwa* (Society had stretched itself and now it was no longer there where he was). The verb *kujinyumbua* undergoes an extension of its first meaning ('to extend, to stretch itself / oneself') to the figural one 'to leave old things behind', 'to progress'. Even though, from a historical perspective we should doubt the throughout positive character of this shedding of skin as we relate it to the context of the novel which is Tanzanian society before and after *ujamaa*.⁴³ But this is not the decisive point here. Important is that the shedding of skin itself carries positive connotations as it transports "*ile maana ya uwezo wa kujivua ukale, wa kujivua uhai wa zamani na kuwa na uhai mpya, maisha mapya, mtazamo mpya*" (the meaning of the potential to put down with the past, to put down with former vitality and to get new vitality, a new life, a new point of view; Interview Prof. Senkoro).

6. Conclusion

"Huu ndio uzuri wa uchoraji na upakaji rangi wa siku hizi. Picha moja inaweza kuwa na maelezo elfu au zaidi. Inaweza kuwa na wazo tofauti kwa kila mtazamaji. Ndio kusema picha ya siku hizi haiwezi kutoeleweka, lakini wakati huo huo, mmoja anaweza kuona zaidi ya mwingine." (*Kichwamaji*. 208)

"This indeed is the beauty of modern drawing and painting. One work of art can have one thousand or more explanations. It can have a different idea for every observer. This indeed is to say that modern works of art cannot be *not* understood; but at the same time, one can see more [in it] than another." [translation L. D.]

Directly after the description of an abstract work of art in *Kichwamaji* we find this statement on the hermeneutics of images that we can read in remarkable analogy to the plurality of readings that is postulated by poststructuralist literary theories. As any author of so-called high calibre rejects to the reduction of his work of art to one "right" meaning, scholars in literary studies should also be reluctant to attempt a mono-dimensional interpretation. If we want to relate meaning to a text, we can only do so by approaching this meaning. There is no single "right" meaning. There are always other possible readings. This is especially the case when it comes to the interpretation of elements of figurativeness like allegory.

In the following, the results of our analysis of some allegories in Kezilahabi's early novels shall be summarized. We include here allegories which have not been given in here, but

⁴³ In the last third of the novel, we notice a certain glorification of *ujamaa*. However, this is contrasted by Kezilahabi's drama *Kaputula la Marx* which he wrote at the same time (cf. 2.1). Furthermore, Kezilahabi has criticised the official censorship of novels that were supposed to be too critical concerning *ujamaa* (cf. Kezilahabi 1980: 82). For *gamba la nyoka* as a strong affirmative metaphor for *ujamaa* cf. Gibbe 1980: 52.

which we have analysed in length elsewhere (cf. Diegner 2001)⁴⁴. After that we will have a look at the central theme complexes that are treated in these allegories.

As the analysis has shown, it is possible to interpret many of the allegories as the author gives us various explicit hints to do so. This is accomplished by the indication of a change of genre before or after the central passage: *ninaweza kukueleza kwa hadithi* (I can explain it to you by a tale; allegory No. 17), text in a text and *tuchukue mfano* (let us take an example; allegory No. 13) or *wazee walisema* (the elders said; allegory No. 18). Another variant is explanation or transfer: *tunaweza kulichukua kama* (we can take it as; allegory No. 14) or *ukilinganisha na* (if you compare [it] with; 4.2.3; cf. also 4.2.1; furthermore allegories No. 15 and 12). These two variants are not always easy to distinguish: *labda mfano huu unaweza kumsaidia mwanadamu katika kuelewa* (maybe this example can help Man understand; 4.1.2.). There is often a combination of both variants (before or after the central passage; cf. 4.2.2.; furthermore allegories No. 11 and 16). Their common feature is that we can explore the second level of meaning when reading it for the first time.

We can assume that these explicit allegories derive from the didactic impetus of the author.⁴⁵

Starting out from this observation we can draw two conclusions. Firstly, the danger of "slipping" into a too far-reaching literary interpretation is reduced by the author himself. Secondly, this practice of the author can justify the assignment of meaning also to the implicit allegories. Thus the explicit allegories can serve as an important interpretative key to the implicit ones. As indicating features of implicit allegories have proved: the exponent position of text passages (4.1.4. as an exposition, 4.2.4. as an epilogue), the high degree of attention which is attributed to text passages (4.1.1.), a remarkable genre (e.g. a song in allegory No. 10), and laconic concluding sentences without real explanations (4.1.3.). Thus not every allegory is nor has it to remain a "*figura cryptica*" (Haverkamp 1998: 30; 40). –

Statistically, we have exposed an equal number of explicit and implicit allegories (4 versus 4) whereas on the whole of our research we found a dominance of explicit allegories in respect to implicit allegories (13 to 8).⁴⁶ –

The second part of this conclusion will shed some light on the central thematic complexes that are transported by using allegories.

⁴⁴ As we have exposed nine allegories here we will number the other allegories in the following way: 10. Allegory of the rabbit and the hunters, *Rosa Mistika*: 10-12; 11. Allegory of the unhappy chameleon, *Rosa Mistika*: 43; 12. Allegory of the hunter and his last arrow, *Rosa Mistika*: 91; 96; 13. Allegory of the snail, *Kichwamaji*: 145f.; 14. Allegory of black circle and white signs, *Kichwamaji*: 208; 15. Allegory of dragon [large water lizard] and flies, *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 29; 16. Allegory of rabbit, lion and elephant, *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 98; 17. Allegory of lion and baboon, *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: 112f.; 18. Allegory of inundated river and new hoe handle, *Gamba la Nyoka*: 134f.

⁴⁵ In this feature, Kezilahabi follows the tradition of the founding father of modern Swahili literature, Shaaban Robert (1909-1962).

⁴⁶ Unlike in the present study, the allegories of the falling leaves and the grain of sand were counted as two separate allegories.

As a first thematic complex evolves the reflection on death. If we take for instance the allegory of falling leaves (4.2.3.) we find in it the aspect of unavailability of death – every day brings Man nearer to his death. In this regard, it is interesting to have a look at the following passage in *Kichwamaji* (which immediately precedes the above-mentioned art description):

"Ukweli ni kwamba sisi wanadamu tunakufa pole pole. Watu wengi wanafikiri kwamba kifo kinakuja mara moja. Hii ni jambo la uwongo. Tangu mwanadamu anapozaliwa anaanza kufa pole pole ingawa yeye anajiona yu sawa. Siku zake zinakatwa moja moja. Kaburi ni hatua yetu ya mwisho tu. Kazimoto, tunapoishi tunakufa pole pole, kwa hiyo kufa ni kuishi." (*Kichwamaji*: p. 206)

"The truth is that we human beings are dying slowly. Many people think that death comes all of a sudden. This is a matter of untruth. Since Man is born one begins to die slowly even if one considers oneself being sane. His / her days are cut off one by one. The grave is just our last step. Kazimoto, while we are living we are dying slowly, thus to die is to live." [translation L. D.]

Life as a slow process of dying – it is clear that this motif is not limited to Kezilahabi's allegories (cf. Horn 1998). The allegory of the snail (No. 13) wants Man to use this insight for self-reflection.

The motif *tunapoishi tunakufa pole pole, kwa hiyo kufa ni kuishi* (While we are living we are dying slowly, thus to die is to live) is contrasted by Kezilahabi with the point of view which focuses more on the arbitrariness of (sudden) death. What is named *jambo la uwongo* (matter of untruth) above, only a few pages later becomes the traveller in the evening wind (4.2.4.) who faces a or his own corpse.

Strongly connected to the allegorical attempt of coming to terms with death, we can state as a second thematic complex the question of the meaning of life. Despite knowing about his own mortality, Man tries to make sense out of his life, and to make the best of it, respectively. This is often not achieved – it seems to be as absurd as carrying one grain of sand out of the desert (4.2.3.). Man feels powerless like a leaf floating in the wind (*ibidem*). In the latter aspect the religious element plays an important role: the way back to paradise is barred (*ibidem*) and the question of God or a higher being is an inexplicable mystery (4.1.2.).

These two thematic complexes contribute to the third one of worldview. Corresponding to the metaphoric title *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, the arbitrarily hurt bird (4.1.4.) and the flies that are heading for their fate (allegory No. 15) contribute to the elaboration of the idea of Man as a powerless, void being living in a world that gets more and more incomprehensible and dangerous.

Apart from these philosophical ones we have to distinguish other thematic complexes.

The fourth thematic complex is the conflict of (mainly) cultural alienation. There is the dimension *African tradition – European influence* (in allegory No. 14). Inside of Tanzanian society, there is also the dimension *older – younger generation* in the allegory of the unreadability of the other (4.2.1.). The consequences of this alienation do not necessarily have to be negative: a lizard can continue its life even without its tail (4.1.1.).

Furthermore, some allegories reflect the criticism of society inherent to Kezilahabi's work (fifth thematic complex). Two aspects are put in the foreground: traditional family structure (4.1.3.; the threatened rabbit in allegory No. 10) and the role of women (ibidem; allegory No. 15). As a sixth thematic complex, we find the political dimension represented in some allegories: the problem of sustainable development – the race between lion and baboon (allegory No. 17) – and the specifically Tanzanian solution *ujamaa* – the new hoe handle which causes calluses (allegory No. 18) and the natural shedding of a snake's skin (5.4.). –

Nevertheless, the variety of thematic complexes is not limited to philosophical (1-3) and, in a broader sense, socio-cultural ones (4-6). There are also allegories about private life, often humoristic: the turned eyes of a chameleon (allegory No. 11), the fooled lion and elephant (allegory No. 16), or the large ears of the king (4.2.2.).

The number and variety of allegories described and analysed here underline the great importance of allegories in Kezilahabi's early novels. In my view, this importance reflects to a great extent a general characteristic of the Swahili-speaking cultural area.

In its aesthetic creation, allegories form a specific feature of Kezilahabi's early novels that has contributed to Kezilahabi's reputation in contemporary Swahili literature.

"Kati ya waandishi walioandika katika lugha zao za awali anastahili nafasi Afrika nzima. Hivi leo maandishi yake bado yanayo nafasi Afrika Mashariki na wale wanaohakiki Fasihi ya Afrika Mashariki bila ya kutaja jina lake hawajui Fasihi ya Afrika Mashariki ni ipi." (Kezilahabi 1975: p. 198)

"Among the authors who wrote in their mother tongues he deserves recognition all over Africa. Up to now his works only gain recognition in East Africa, and those who interpret East African literature without mentioning his name do not know what East African literature is." [translation L. D.]

This statement referring to the founding father of modern Swahili literature, Shaaban Robert (1909-1962), made by Kezilahabi himself, from our perspective today can be applied for Kezilahabi himself during his lifetime.

The aesthetic creation and the thematic variety of the analysed novels, which evolves among other elements out of the allegories given here, should contribute to giving Euphrase Kezilahabi a firm place in world literature.

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